



National Child Care Information Center

A service of the Child Care Bureau

NCCIC

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DEVELOPING EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES

Key Process Strategies

The process used by a State to develop early learning guidelines can impact the content of the guidelines, the language used to write them, stakeholder endorsement, and the public and political will generated to move them to implementation.

Include All Representatives of the Early Childhood Community

To create a unified vision of early care and education and ensure that guidelines are applicable to all children across early care and education settings, States should obtain input from a cross section of educators, policy-makers, providers and parents who represent:

- ✦ Child care, Head Start, early intervention, and prekindergarten programs;
- ✦ Young children who are English-language learners and those with special needs; and
- ✦ Children in center-based care, family child care, and family, friends and neighbor care.

Determine the Purpose and Scope of the Early Learning Guidelines Document

It is important to establish agreement from the outset regarding the purpose and intended use of early learning guidelines. This may involve discussions on the nature of child development, the appropriateness of guidelines, the role of assessment, and the values underlying the group's approach. Many States have developed Guiding Principles to reflect their agreement on these issues and establish the boundaries of their documents.

Develop a Strong Foundation and Culture of Collaboration

The development of early learning guidelines is often a catalyst for new levels of collaboration among early care and education stakeholders. Among the challenges faced by groups developing early learning guidelines are changes in group membership, group relationships, and the resource and political contexts in which the work is being done.

Collaborative efforts are supported by:

- ✦ Relying on principles of working together, such as commitment and good faith efforts;
- ✦ Referencing the group's overall goals as ways of finding compromise and avoiding turf issues; and
- ✦ Sharing information and keeping all members up to date on activities and timelines.

Establish a Support Infrastructure

While the outcomes of group work depend on including appropriate stakeholders and establishing vision and commitment, the progress is equally dependent on the establishment of a supporting infrastructure which includes:

- ✦ A leader or executive committee to make key decisions;
- ✦ A facilitator to direct attention to group process and completion of tasks;
- ✦ Committees and workgroups with well-defined tasks and timelines;
- ✦ Formal and informal channels of timely communication; and
- ✦ Access to resources such as time, finances, and personnel.

Resources

Developing and Implementing Early Learning Guidelines: The Case of Rhode Island, is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/ri-study.html> or in PDF format at <http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/ri-study.pdf>.

Selected Resources on Early Learning Guidelines, is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/selected-res-guide.html> and in PDF format at <http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/selected-res-guide.pdf>.

The Child Care Bureau's CD-ROM, *Supporting an Early Learning Framework: State Child Care Administrators Meeting, August 2003*, contains a video clip and PowerPoint presentations for the workshop "Early Learning Guidelines: Where We Are, Where We Are Heading," which includes discussions on determining purpose and scope of early learning guidelines. The CD is available at no cost and may be ordered online from NCCIC at: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/sam2004>.

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